



NEWS RELEASE
May 17, 2011

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Michigan Education Leader Honored as an Afterschool Champion in Nation's Capital

***Parents, Educators, Students, Afterschool Leaders
Urge Congress to Increase Afterschool Funding, Help Expand Science, Technology,
Engineering and Math Programming***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance today honored Kathleen Straus, a Member of the Michigan State Board of Education, for her support for afterschool programs at the “Breakfast of Champions,” a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring FIRST Robotics founder Dean Kamen. Straus has a long history of supporting before- and afterschool programs and of helping to strengthen links between those programs and the school day. She was one of just nine state champions from around the country honored at the Breakfast for supporting and working on behalf of afterschool programs. The Michigan After-School Partnership nominated her for the honor.

As President of the State Board of Education, Straus supported the model standards of quality for out of school time programs and encouraged the Michigan Board of Education to submit a grant in support of the Michigan After-School Partnership, a statewide afterschool network.

“Kathleen’s participation in the Michigan After-School Partnership to strengthen the links between the school day and out of school time and her work to ensure that out of school programs are among the Board of Education’s priorities and goals have been invaluable,” said Mary Sutton, Executive Director of the Michigan After-School Partnership.

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the tenth annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of parents, educators, children, program directors and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. Following the Breakfast, participants fanned out across Capitol Hill to meet with Members of Congress and talk to them about the importance of afterschool programs and expanding opportunities for kids to engage in STEM activities in those programs. This year is The Year of Science in Afterschool.

“Afterschool programs are a lifeline for working families, they keep kids safe and – most important – inspire them to learn,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Today, we are proud to honor the state champions who have dedicated themselves to ensuring that children have access to these crucial programs. It’s no secret that our nation has some serious catching-up to do when it comes to math and the sciences. We know that

afterschool programs are successful in getting children excited about the sciences. That excitement and interest has been shown to be a better predictor than good grades or test scores of who will pursue careers in the sciences. By offering children the opportunity to try robotics, CSI, rocket-building or constructing wind turbines, afterschool programs are developing future computer programmers, forensic scientists and engineers.”

Other state champions honored at the *Afterschool for All Challenge* are: Agnes Quiñones, Education Consultant, Connecticut State Department of Education; Nancy Volpe, Consultant-Youth Programs/America’s Promise, CVS Consultant, Pathways to Pharmacy and President, Volpe Communications in Kansas; R.T. Rybak, Mayor of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota; Sherry Comer, Afterschool Services Director, Camdenton R-III Schools, Camdenton, Missouri; Vaughn L. McKoy, President, PSEG Foundation, New Jersey; Kyle Stewart, Executive Director, Alliance of New York State YMCAs, Inc.; Carmen M. Medina, Chief of the Division, Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learning, Division of Student Services; Mark H. Emery, Administrator for After-School Programs, Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia.

The 2011 *Afterschool for All Challenge* is sponsored by: United States Tennis Association, Peavey Electronics, NAMM, Open Society Foundations, Cable in the Classroom, National AfterSchool Association, Clever Crazes for Kids, and Arnold and Sandra Grant. Additional funding is provided by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Time Warner Cable, Noyce Foundation and jcpenny.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.